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THE MUSICAL INTERPRETATION OF SHAKESPEARE ON THE MODERN STAGE

By EDWARD J. DENT

THE Shakespeare festivals of the present year will no doubt have included, at any rate in those countries where people still have the leisure and detachment of mind to prepare thereto, some attempt on a larger or smaller scale to give performances of the poet's plays that may stand out above the average level and serve as new models for the interpretation of these works in the future. New experiments will have been tried, we may expect, in scenery, in costume and in the general style of execution; there will have been serious effort made to grapple with the dramatic, literary and decorative problems involved. What measure of intelligent effort, we may wonder, will have been expended on a problem of no less vital import—the problem of Shakespeare's incidental music?

There are many playgoers, musical as well as unmusical, to whom music in the theatre is nothing but an unmitigated nuisance. Some will even go so far as to say that opera itself is a spoiling of two good things; but in this case they merely show that they have not grasped the fundamental principles of opera, either owing to their own mental inertia, or quite probably because the operatic principle has not been fully grasped by the performers, or, it may even be, by the composers of such operas as they may have witnessed. As regards music in connection with modern plays, there is often good reason enough for condemning it. Yet there are few English theatres that have the courage to go without music between the acts of a play, although the music may have nothing whatever to do with the play itself; and to the popular romantic drama of to-day, or to the popular melodrama of yesterday, the conventional tremolandos and muted violin solos are still considered indispensable.

The fact is that in all these cases the employment of music is a tradition that has come down to us from the Elizabethan stage. The Elizabethan playhouse served the double purpose of theatre and concert room. There is abundant testimony both to

the popularity and to the excellence of the instrumental music provided in those days before the play and between the acts; and there is hardly a single drama of Shakespeare or any other Elizabethan poet which does not definitely require music, vocal or instrumental, as an essential feature of the performance.

One effect of the Puritan domination, strange as it may seem at first sight, was to give a considerable stimulus to musical activity in England. It was only after the Court masques had come to an end for want of a court, and the public theatres had been definitely closed, that the first attempts at the production of opera were made in this country. During the later years of the Commonwealth the drama was able to make a tentative and even successful reappearance under a musical disguise, with the result that when the Restoration reopened the theatres and gave free rein to the natural dramatic instincts of the English people, the operatic tendencies imported from Italy and France gained a strong foothold on our stage. The Elizabethan musical tradition, even after the Restoration, still maintained its strength to a great extent in spite of new developments in music, in spite of the new French influences in drama, and in spite of the complete remodelling of the theatres themselves by Inigo Jones and his successors. Shakespeare was still acted, but in the revised editions of Davenant, Dryden and Shadwell, who had no scruple in rewriting his plays with a view to introducing the novel attractions of stage mechanism and the more elaborated music of Locke and Purcell. *The Tempest* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the two plays in which music bears its largest part, were in fact definitely described as operas, and set to music by Purcell under the titles of *The Enchanted Island* and *The Fairy Queen*. Yet in spite of Purcell's music, they are no more operas than they were when Shakespeare first produced them. They are still plays with music; the principal characters never sing at all, and the music, for all its elaboration, is merely incident alto the drama. In the eighteenth century the only Shakespeare music of any importance is that of Arne, whose setting of the songs in *As You Like It* are still popular. A less-known setting of "Come away, Death" was revived recently by Mr. Plunket Greene; it is remarkable for a tragic feeling not often to be found in Arne's music.

The classical example of music to a Shakespeare play, it need hardly be said, is Mendelssohn's setting of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The overture was composed in 1825, the rest of the music in 1843 for a performance of the play in the New Palace at Potsdam. Mendelssohn's work marks an entirely new epoch in the

history of Shakespearean music. The Romantic movement had brought a new outlook on Shakespeare himself, both in England and in Germany. The translations of Tieck and Schlegel were beginning to establish Shakespeare as a classic for the German stage. A play of Shakespeare was no longer a well-worn convention to be refurbished and pulled about at will by any actor or manager who wanted to make an effect and astonish an audience; a standard text had been drawn up, and the scholarly interpretation of Shakespeare for his own sake had become to some extent a national ideal both in Germany and in England.

Equally important is the new outlook which the Romantic movement had brought to music and musical drama. Two points call for special consideration: the combination of music with spoken words, and the use of music for what we may call atmospheric effects. We naturally associate both of these characteristics with the name of Weber, but they can be traced historically to earlier composers and to other countries than Germany. Music as a background to speech is one of the typical features of the Elizabethan stage. We find an attempt at "atmospheric" music in Locke's music to *The Tempest*, and there are further examples of it in Purcell's music for the same play, as well as in *King Arthur* and *The Fairy Queen*. It is, however, in the operas of Rameau that effects of "atmosphere" are first secured with a real mastery of method, and from Rameau the line of descent is clear through Gluck and the first French romantics, Méhul and Lesueur, whose works were well known to the German musicians of the early nineteenth century. And although after the appearance of *Der Freischütz* we feel that both musical "atmosphere" and declamation to music are essentially characteristic of the German stage, there is a curious and interesting throw-back to English tradition in Weber's *Oberon*, which was composed in 1825 to an English libretto for an English theatre, and based on English principles of construction that trace their origin to Purcell's *King Arthur* and the operatic versions of Shakespeare which immediately preceded it.

The interest in plays with incidental music which was a marked feature of the German stage during the forties was due to the initiative of the King of Prussia, Frederick William IV. It was by his wish that the *Antigone* of Sophocles was produced at Potsdam in October, 1841, in a German translation, to music composed by Mendelssohn. The play was given publicly in Leipzig and Berlin the following year, and met with remarkable success. The enthusiasm which it aroused in the cultured circles

of Leipzig was amusingly caricatured by Lortzing in his comic opera *Der Wildschütz*. In the same year the King of Prussia had already commissioned Mendelssohn to supply incidental music for Racine's *Athalie*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Tempest* and *Oedipus Coloneus*; and in 1844 he was desired to compose music to the *Eumenides*. Neither this last nor *The Tempest* were ever written. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was produced in the autumn of 1843, *Oedipus* and *Athalie* not until 1845, though the music of *Athalie* was mostly composed in 1843. The account of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* given by Sir George Grove is amusing:

The music met with enthusiastic applause; but the play was for long a subject of wonder to the Berliners. Some disputed whether Tieck or Shakespeare were the author; others believed that Shakespeare had translated it from German into English. Some, in that refined atmosphere, were shocked by the scenes with the clowns, and annoyed that the king should have patronized so low a piece; and a very distinguished personage expressed to Mendelssohn himself his regret that such lovely music should have been wasted on so poor a play.

Mendelssohn's reputation as a composer has passed through many and various phases since those days of seventy years ago, but the music to *A Midsummer Night's Dream* still remains popular, both in Germany and England, and probably many of those who condemn him utterly would be willing to make an exception in favour of this one work at least. Indeed it seems hardly possible to think of Shakespeare's play without Mendelssohn's music, so intimately are the two associated in the minds of most playgoers.

Had he lived to write music, as Frederick William IV desired, for *The Tempest*, that play might have become more familiar to English audiences than it is. It was obviously under the influence of Mendelssohn that music was composed for it in 1861 by Arthur Sullivan, then just fresh from his studies at Leipzig. He wrote music for various other plays of Shakespeare between 1871 and 1888—*The Merchant of Venice*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Henry VIII*, and *Macbeth*. In later years the tradition was carried on by Edward German. His music to *Henry VIII* at the Lyceum Theatre in 1892 brought him immediate popularity. It was followed by *Romeo and Juliet* (1895), *As You Like It* (1896) and *Much Ado about Nothing* (1898).

There is no need to criticize these works in detail. The well-known dances from *Henry VIII* are typical of most of Edward German's dance-movements, and there is a certain same-

ness about all of them. At the same time there is much that deserves high praise. The music is admirably suited to the stage. It maintains consistently a certain distinction of style, and never shows the least sign of vulgarity, which is more than can be said of Sullivan's stage-music. It is effectively scored and shows a scholarly sense of form—no small merit in music for the theatre. In the music to *Romeo and Juliet* it is evident that the composer has taken his task quite seriously, and has produced music which if not strikingly original is very sincerely felt. Lastly, there is in all Edward German's stage-music a certain characteristic of style which his critics have agreed to describe as "an English flavour." Let me frankly confess myself somewhat sceptical on the subject of musical patriotism. The suggestions of "Staines Morris" and "Sir Roger de Coverly" which contribute to the effect of the "rustic dances," "shepherds' dances," etc., do not amount to more than what we may call English "local colour" of a somewhat obvious nature: any clever composer of any nationality could produce "English" dances or Spanish or Russian dances that would be accepted as equally effective. More definitely English are his reminiscences of Stanford and Parry in the serious episodes of his work; and if at moments of real tragedy he expresses himself in terms of pure Schumann, he is but following distinguished precedent.

We shall be in a better position to judge of what is really English in music if we can compare settings of the same play by composers of different nationalities. An interesting example for study is afforded by *The Tempest*, which has been set by English, French and German composers, and is a particularly fortunate example, since it demands more music than any other play of Shakespeare. As Caliban says:

the isle is full of noises,
Sounds and sweet airs, that give delight and hurt not.
Sometimes a thousand twanging instruments
Will hum about mine ears, and sometimes voices
That, if I then had wak'd after long sleep,
Will make me sleep again.

In *The Tempest*, if in no other play of Shakespeare, there might be claimed good reason not only for the composition of music to fit all the moments where the poet has expressly demanded it, but also for a general background of "sounds and sweet airs" suggesting associated trains of thought and gently underlining the emotional values of the spoken dialogue.

Sullivan's music was written before he had had any practical experience of the stage. This is, in a certain sense, an advantage: it is the work of a young man, accomplished indeed in the technique of his art, but unspoilt by routine or popular success, and intent before all things on expressing himself to the full. He seizes his opportunities in the Overture and entr'actes, which are of considerable length, in the banquet scene, and in the masque of Juno and Ceres, with its accompanying dance. His settings of Ariel's songs are graceful and charming, and he is evidently anxious not to over-develop them. Indeed, in all the music which accompanies the action of the play Sullivan shows a strong sense of reticence and restraint. His attempts to be dramatic in accompanying dialogue are not always very successful, though there is some strongly written music in the last act when Prospero lays aside his magic robes. It must be remembered that Wagnerian methods had not become common property in 1861, and the technique of Weber and Mendelssohn was hardly adequate to solve all the problems of accompanied declamation.

It should be noted that Sullivan did not set any of the songs for the comic characters. The only occasion on which he allows himself to come in contact with them is in the second scene of Act III, where Ariel plays the tune for them on the tabor and pipe, just before the banquet is brought in. The composer seems carefully to avoid even any suggestion of Caliban, Stephano or Trinculo in his music, wishing to associate it only with Ariel and the gracious spirits.

A curious contrast is provided by the music of Ernest Chausson, a pupil of César Franck, to a French translation by Maurice Bouchor. Chausson's music is accessible to me only in a vocal score, and I do not know whether it originally included more than the few numbers printed: the three songs of Ariel, the duet for Juno and Ceres, and two dances, apparently for the banquet scene and for the nymphs and reapers. The settings of Ariel's songs, and some other Shakespeare songs published in the *Recueil de Vingt Mélodies* are of extraordinary interest to the English reader as examples of French criticism on Shakespeare. There are probably not many Frenchmen now-a-days who would be content to dispose of Shakespeare in the words of Voltaire:

Il avait un génie plein de force et de fécondité, de naturel et de sublime, sans la moindre étincelle de bon goût et sans la moindre connaissance des règles... Il y a de si belles scènes, des morceaux si grands et terribles épandus dans ses farces monstrueuses qu'on appelle tragédies, que ses pièces ont toujours été jouées avec un grand succès. Le temps,

qui fait seul la réputation des hommes, rend à la fin leurs défauts respectables. La plupart des idées bizarres et gigantesques de cet auteur ont acquis au bout de deux cents ans le droit de passer pour sublimes....

C'est dans ces morceaux détachés que les tragiques anglais ont jusqu'ici excellé; leurs pièces, presque toutes barbares, dépourvues de bienséance, d'ordre, de vraisemblance, ont des lueurs étonnantes au milieu de cette nuit. Le style est trop ampoulé, trop hors de la nature, trop copié des écrivains hébreux si remplis de l'enfure asiatique; mais aussi les échasses du style figuré, sur lesquelles la langue anglaise est guindée, élèvent l'esprit bien haut, quoique par une marche irrégulière.

Yet in spite of the romantic movement of the nineteenth century, the French mind remains the same. It may become enthusiastic for Shakespeare, but it is always conscious of the principles of Racine, and if it is for a moment carried away by the wild lawlessness of English poetry, it never forgets that such raptures are essentially foreign to the genius of its own language.

We English have become so accustomed to Shakespeare as the foundation of our modern literary language, we are so much in the habit of taking him for granted, that such musical settings as Chausson's are positively startling in the unrestrained passion of their utterance. Chausson is at all times inclined, like Hugo Wolf, towards a certain morbid insistence on painful emotions, and his treatment of words is vigorously declamatory as compared, let us say, with Berlioz. But we need only look at his settings of Maeterlinck's *Serres Chaudes*, which are definitely and deliberately morbid in temperament, to see how much more vivid is the impression produced on him by Shakespeare. To introduce his settings of "Come away, Death," or "Take, oh take those lips away" into an English performance of *Twelfth Night* or *Measure for Measure* would for us upset the emotional balance of the plays, and centre the entire tragic force in songs which we are accustomed to regard as nothing more than episodical.

Chausson's music to *The Tempest* is not tragic, as these other songs are; but it seems that he is at some pains to suggest to his French audience what an English audience has absorbed almost unconsciously from childhood. Ariel to us has tended to become an institution: Chausson feels he must re-create him entirely for listeners who have never heard of him before. One feels almost ashamed of one's national apathy towards Shakespeare when one realizes how deeply he has moved those who read him in another tongue, and that one so utterly incapable, as it seems to us, of reproducing him.

One turns with peculiar pleasure at this moment to the settings of Humperdinck, whose music, in everything that he

writes, seems always to express all that is most essentially German and most lovable in Germany. There Shakespeare is no stranger indeed. Some people would even go so far as to say that he was more of a national institution in Germany than in England; and I remember a German friend who maintained to me that this must inevitably be the case, if only for the reason that the German version of Shakespeare is in the language of the present day, whereas Shakespeare's original English is antiquated and partially obsolete. It is curious, is it not? that there should be so many Shakespearean commentators among those whom Tieck and Schlegel ought to have relieved of all further anxiety as to the poet's meaning!

Humperdinck's music to *The Tempest* (1906) is at first sight less original than either Sullivan's or Chausson's. His themes are all rather obvious in character: he sees the play very much in terms of *Rheingold*, and accepts wholeheartedly the tradition of Weber and Mendelssohn. What is really characteristic of Humperdinck is his exquisite technique, his subtlety in the use and development of somewhat familiar themes, and his temperamental outlook, so familiar to us all in the infinite kindness of *Hänsel und Gretel* and *Königskinder*. He has, needless to say, one great advantage over Sullivan in the familiarity of all German theatres and German audiences with Wagnerian principles of stage-craft. No English theatre of Sullivan's days would have known how to deal with the innumerable little scraps of music which have to synchronize exactly with some particular word or movement of the actor, and no English actor would have realized for a moment the necessity of timing his actions by a conductor's beat.

The introduction, opening with easily recognizable motives representing Ariel and Prospero, works gradually up on a rocking figure to a representation of the storm. The curtain rises, showing the ship, and the music goes on continuously throughout the scene, the dialogue being spoken in carefully planned pauses. Shakespeare's "A confused noise within"—"Mercy on us"—"We split, we split!" etc., is actually sung by a male chorus, ending in a cry of "Weh!" at which the mainmast falls, clouds cover the scene and the storm subsides. Gonzalo's last words, "The wills above be done; but I would fain die a dry death," are apparently cut. The storm music gradually dies down, due time being allowed for the changing of the scenery; soft trumpets and horns hint at the melody of "Full fathom five" and after two solitary flutes have taken up the original "rocking" theme, the curtain rises again on Scene 2, where harps and brass announce Prospero

and Ariel again. This scene will illustrate Humperdinck's methods. It is all one continuous piece of music; it is elaborately descriptive and dramatic, while at the same time it is carefully designed so as to be a perfectly logical example of pure musical form. The one motive which stands out by itself, undeveloped, is the melody of "Full fathom five" which is to reappear in its complete form later in the play.

It is the symphonic, much more than operatic, treatment of themes that gives this music its peculiar interest, especially as a commentary on Shakespeare. When Prospero sends Miranda to sleep (Act I, Scene 2), soft music is heard, which is turned to account in Act V, Scene 1, when Ferdinand and Miranda are discovered at chess—so, at least, according to the English Shakespeare; but the German version discovers Ferdinand playing on the lute, the music being given to the harp in the orchestra. Another interesting chain of scenes begins with "Come unto these yellow sands." Ariel appears, not invisible as in Shakespeare, but in the character of a nymph riding on a dolphin, and playing the flute, followed by Ferdinand, and accompanied by other nymphs and spirits with flutes and harps. The song is played by flute and harp, then sung by Ariel, the chorus of male voices entering softly with "Horch! wau wau! es bellt der Hund!", utilizing the harp's previous figure of accompaniment. A big *crescendo* is made by the full chorus on the "kikiriki" of strutting chanticleer, after which the sopranos and altos take up Ariel's song in chorus, accompanied by the tenors and basses singing their "wau wau" in falsetto.

Sullivan, like a well-bred Englishman, had evidently been a little embarrassed by Shakespeare's farm-yard imitations. He avoids drawing attention to the "bow-wow," and indicates the "cock-a-diddle-dow" only by one short phrase for hautboys. Chausson, remembering Gluck's Cerberus, is less afraid, and even allows Ariel to shriek out "ce cri de joie — cocorico!" in a quasi-recitative phrase. Humperdinck has no qualms about making himself ridiculous. Shakespeare wrote it, it must be right and beautiful. And by the time we reach the awkward moment, we have had so much music, we are so saturated with the half-operatic atmosphere of the enchanted island that we are ready to hear these cries of nature transformed and turned to poetry. But this is not the last of the watch-dogs, for in Act IV, Scene 1, when there "enter divers spirits in shape of hounds and hunt [Caliban, Stephano and Trinculo] about" Humperdinck works up another big musical scene, beginning with Caliban's song set for

two piccolos and drums; and, on the appearance of the hounds, he accompanies it by the full chorus singing "wau wau" to the same figure as before.

The Neues Schauspielhaus at Berlin, for which this music was composed, seems to have interpreted Shakespeare's play with a good deal of freedom. Stage effects were considerably elaborated, and some scenes altered and curtailed with a view to more satisfactory musical effect; but space forbids me to describe the performance in further detail. Humperdinck has written music for three other plays of Shakespeare: *The Merchant of Venice* (1905); *The Winter's Tale*, (1906); and *Twelfth Night*, (1907), all performed at the Deutsches Theater in Berlin. None of them attain the elaboration, or even the poetry of *The Tempest*, though they are not without beautiful moments. It is in the setting of jocular songs that Humperdinck is—to an English reader—least successful. For one thing, they are too finished, so that the very obvious cadential formulæ suggest with painful insistence the ordinary musical atmosphere of the nineteenth century, and so appear suddenly to thrust such people as Sir Toby Belch or Autolycus into a period to which neither they nor Shakespeare nor we ourselves belong. There are certain vulgarities—if I may use the word without offence—in Shakespeare which all accept with joy, but which we cannot endure in another language or another period, and the composer of Shakespearean music, when he is confronted with this problem, may easily fall into the error of suggesting not Shakespeare's characters but a certain type of elderly actor who once impersonated them.

Like Sullivan, Humperdinck has sometimes been obliged to write music for the sake of making a musical diversion. Both composers introduce into *The Merchant of Venice* a song sung behind the scenes to Italian words, and both composers make a great display of the masque under cover of which Jessica elopes, the result being to transport us for the moment into the Venice of Offenbach's *Contes d'Hoffmann*. Humperdinck is at his best in the final scene of *The Winter's Tale*, but his sheep-shearing scene, charming as it is considered simply as Humperdinck, seems utterly inappropriate to the words of Shakespeare. The waltz and mazurka rhythms which seem now so banal and tawdry are characteristic of the period rather than of Germany, for Sullivan showed no more discrimination: and indeed a German audience might well argue that the *Ländler* was exactly the right dance to employ in a German theatre, and had more authoritative

tradition behind it than Edward German's Wardour-Street Pavanes and Bourrées.

It is in fact rather salutary for us to look at Shakespeare occasionally through foreign eyes, for we tend in this country to attach perhaps too much value to the mere sound of the words rather than the ideas expressed. We have made Shakespeare into something of a fetish, we have disconnected him altogether from modern life, as we disconnect Sundays from week-days. It is one of the fatal vices of English artistic life that we cannot cure ourselves of our ingrained romanticism, our unreasoning devotion to what is old and remote, our foolish enthusiasm for "quaintness." "Quaintness," as Rupert Brooke well said, "which swathes dead books as sentimentality swathes dead people, has little hold on the living." Characteristically English was Mr. William Poel's plan of producing Shakespeare without scenery, acted in Elizabethan dress and accompanied by Elizabethan music. Such principles, however, appealed mainly to audiences of an academic type, for a scheme of Elizabethan music to a play requires not only careful selection, but in addition a certain willingness to listen carefully on the part of the audience.

Between 1909 and 1914 the Marlowe Dramatic Society at Cambridge exhibited some interesting experiments in this direction, though they generally avoided performing Shakespeare himself. A representation of Marlowe's *Faustus* was given in August, 1910, in honour of some fifty German students who were visiting England, and the musicians among our German guests were very much taken by surprise at the dramatic effect of contemporary incidental music, such an arrangement being apparently quite unknown to the German theatre. A still more elaborate scheme was arranged for *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* in 1911. In this play there are various musical allusions: Old Merrythought sings some thirty snatches of songs, and the Citizen asks the musicians to play Dowland's *Lachrymæ*. To give these items their proper artistic value, and to make the audience realize that they were the favourite tunes of the day, the play was set as it were in a frame of Elizabethan popular music, in the hopes of attuning the audience subconsciously to the common musical atmosphere of the period.

Shakespeare differs from Ben Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, or Massinger¹ in that he does not deal with contemporary English life, so that Elizabethan music for his plays is only necessary if

¹ The Marlowe Society produced also *Epicæne* (1909), *A New Way to Pay Old Debts* (1913), and *The Alchemist* (1914).

we wish strongly to emphasize their Elizabethan character. And if the plays are not given in a definitely Elizabethan setting, Elizabethan music often involves us in further difficulties. Consider such a case as *Julius Cæsar*, in which the only music required is one single song, and even that left to the singer's choice. But though Shakespeare has indicated merely "music and a song" in the stage directions, the music is none the less important. Its function is to prepare for the appearance of Cæsar's ghost, and the music must be carefully chosen with that end in view. Now if the play has up to this point been produced with the idea of suggesting the classical Roman atmosphere, Elizabethan music may well enter with something of a shock. It is indeed hard to know what kind of music will not sound incongruous at this moment, for nothing could be more ridiculous than to see an actress singing, let us say, a Shakespeare song of Sullivan, with orchestral accompaniment, and pretending to accompany herself on a classical lyre! Here is the difficulty: Roman music being out of the question, any other style will risk offending us unless the ear has been subconsciously prepared by other incidental music to create the desired atmosphere; but against this must be set the fact that the more incidental music we add in excess of Shakespeare's own requirements, the less effective do the poet's carefully planned musical scenes become.

Shakespeare's employment of music is an integral part of his dramatic method. His attitude to music is moreover very characteristically English. He loves music and values it, but not as a means of self-expression. Herein lies the explanation of our use of music on the stage, and even to some extent of our national indifference to Opera. For the fundamental principle of all Opera is that music is not only more expressive, but more directly personal than words. In Opera music is the normal language, and the characters themselves create (that is, they should produce the illusion of doing so) not only the music which they sing, but the sounds of the orchestra as well, just as on the viola d'amore the sound of the bowed strings wakens the untouched strings below into sympathetic resonance. In a play, the function of music is totally different; music, so far from being normal, is definitely and essentially abnormal, and in Shakespeare almost always associated with abnormal people and abnormal states of mind—with supernatural beings of all kinds, with drunkards, madmen and decadents or degenerates, as we might now-a-days call them, apart from the obvious employment of music simply as a performance taking place on the stage, as in

case of dances, processions, marches, serenades, etc. There are also certain very interesting cases of music being called for deliberately to induce an abnormal state: the Duke's demand for music in *Twelfth Night*, a similar episode in *Antony and Cleopatra*, the employment of music by Paulina to enhance the effect of the statue scene in *The Winter's Tale*, and the music heard by Richard II as he lies in prison.

There follows from this the curious fact that incidental music for Shakespeare, and probably for most other plays as well, is of necessity bound to be more or less second-rate, or at any rate second-hand—*nachempfundene Kunst*, as the Germans call it. For it is not the function of such music to be essentially creative, to tell us something that we had not known before: it must, to fulfill its dramatic purpose, be to some extent familiar, it must aim primarily at awakening associations. All incidental stage-music, then, bears a certain relationship to the general music, and more especially to the operatic music, of its period: Mendelssohn necessarily hints at Weber, Sullivan at Gounod and Meyerbeer, Humperdinck at Wagner. The inevitable consequence is that such incidental music has little chance of immortality. There may have been times when audiences looked for points of similarity between Shakespeare and Lord Byron, or Shakespeare and Mr. Browning; but we do not for that reason wish to link Shakespeare eternally to Weber or Gounod. We cannot think of Goethe's *Egmont* without the music of Beethoven, and we could never say of Beethoven's *Egmont* music that it was second-hand and purely associational art; but the case is not analogous to that of Shakespeare, partly because the poet and musician were contemporaries, and partly, if a foreigner may dare to express such an opinion, because in this particular conjunction the music has kept the play alive rather than the play the music.

In Germany the devotion to tradition, provided the tradition be not older than the days of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven, is extremely strong. The operas of Weber and the early operas of Wagner are well known to the man in the street, better known probably than even *The Bohemian Girl* or *Maritana* are in England. It is natural, therefore, that such Shakespeare music as Mendelssohn's and Humperdinck's should still hold the stage, even in association with a more modern style of stage-setting and production. Humperdinck's music was, in fact, composed for the Deutsches Theater in Berlin, which compared with the ordinary *Hoftheater* of German *Residenzstädte*, is decidedly advanced in its methods. But Wagnerian music demands a Wagnerian style of

acting; a character must wait for his *leitmotiv* to be announced, and if a "Wagnerian" composer does not possess Wagner's genius for forcible characterization, the wait may easily become tedious. The modern stage is making towards a swifter and directer interpretation of Shakespeare; there is no time to strike attitudes and to mouth too-familiar lines with a specious air of impressiveness.

Those who have seen Granville Barker's productions of Shakespeare will have little desire ever to revive the older methods. The real importance of these new interpretations lies not so much in the decorations as in the manner of delivery. For this reason *The Winter's Tale*, which was the first play produced in this style, was the most poetical and imaginative. Critics who were suddenly brought up against the sad fact that they had never read the play naturally found themselves embarrassed when the lines were delivered at a normal rate of speech. Humperdinck's music, exquisitely beautiful as some of it is, would have been ruinous to such an interpretation, simply because it moves habitually at a much slower *tempo*. In the same way Mendelssohn's music was unthinkable to Granville Barker's production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Mendelssohn's music carries on the tradition of Weber's *Oberon*, and it was just this tradition with which the new style was determined to break once and for all. The music actually employed was arranged by Cecil Sharp on a basis of English folk-songs—an ideally happy conception, if Mr. Sharp had only had the technical skill to carry it out. It was as a matter of fact rather crude and amateurish in effect, and contrasted awkwardly with the perfect finish of the dresses and decorations and of the entire stage-management. Yet even its crudity was not without method, for as in the other two plays, music was employed only when required by the poet. It had to strike the ear, then, as something external and new, and those who designed it probably saw that the mere colour of the modern orchestra would be as offensively conventional and ordinary as that of the pianoforte. It was at least better to be crude and awkward than to employ dull tints of tone, those "art shades" which the most unintelligent may safely employ because "they are always sure to be in good taste."

The problem of Shakespeare music is in a certain sense the problem of all incidental music to plays. Every age must find its own solution of it. It is one of the most fascinating questions of theatrical æsthetics. How far is music active, interpretative, decorative? I hope that the future will see a more intelligent interest taken in the investigation and application of its principles

by musicians, poets and stage-directors than has been the case in the past; we want some one to do for music what Gordon Craig has done for other branches of stage-technique. And Shakespeare has the advantage of being an inexhaustible field for experiment, for he is the one poet whose plays are certain, as far as one can dare say that anything is certain, to hold the stage for all time and for all countries. Moreover, to those plays music is absolutely indispensable, so that the problem of music is one which can never be neglected. Nor can it ever be solved, for to each new generation Shakespeare brings new suggestions, and the necessity of new interpretations in music as in every other means of self-expression.